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ABSTRACT

This paper begins with a brief history of the University of the Third Age (U3A), which began in France in 1972, when a professor at the University of Toulouse conducted a summer school for retired people with a program of lectures, concerts, guided tours, and other cultural activities. It identifies the defining characteristic of the U3A movement in France as its attachment to the term "university." In Britain, the U3A movement was the creation of its members who decided what was to be taught, by whom, in what ways, and at what cost. U3A was relatively late in coming to Australia. The first groups were established in Melbourne in 1984 and continued to grow and epitomize the community-based, do-it-yourself British model. Following eight pages of background, information obtained through a survey of 16 U3As in New South Wales is presented as vignettes, arranged in the chronological order in which the U3As were established. Each U3A is introduced and its regular and distinctive features are highlighted. A conclusion suggests that whether the U3A movement in Australia is in the tradition of British liberal adult education is not the real issue; the real issue is whether, as a movement whose time had come in the 1970s, U3A can sustain its momentum through the 1990s into the 21st century and beyond. It proposes that, for U3A to retain its momentum and relevance, it needs to address the related issues of broadening the membership base and forming a national organization. Appendixes include 42 references, participant list, and draft letter requesting information. (YLB)

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Introduction

The history of adult education in Australia has been described by Whitelock (1974) as being in the great tradition of British liberal adult education. Whitelock borrowed the term "great tradition" from Professor H.C. Wiltshire who, in 1956, coined it in respect of university adult education which would be without examinations, non-vocational, anti-elitist and, above all, given to teaching "humane or liberal studies". A liberal education, Whitelock states, is one with its origins in the classical education of the ancient Greeks, the liberal arts of the medieval university and the nineteenth century writings of Newman and others on the intrinsic value of a liberal university education to the mature mind. Its defining method, says Whitelock (p. 8), following Wiltshire, is "the Socratic method of the small tutorial class, meeting for guided discussion over a lengthy period". A liberal education requires the learner to engage the subject with a maturity of mind, maturity of life experiences and a willingness to find fulfillment and enrichment of the intellectual, emotional and spiritual self.

Notwithstanding Whitelock's contention that Australian adult education is essentially derivative from Britain, there were other influences, notably from North America. These manifested themselves after World War II when Australian society was "more prosperous, better educated (and) more sophisticated" (Whitelock, 1974, p. 264). They were most noticeable in the 1960s and 70s when the Universities Commission for 1967-1969 recommended withdrawal of Commonwealth funding for university adult education. The ensuing controversy and division led some to look elsewhere than Britain for their inspiration. They found it in the diversity of North American adult education and, in looking oveseas, moved to internationalise local ideas. The visits to Australia by Sheats, Charters and Liveright in the years from 1959 to 1967 encouraged this trend (Morris, n.d.).

Notwithstanding these overseas intellectual influences and the establishment of statutory boards in states where university involvement was non-existent or had declined, Whitelock believes that the ideology of the great tradition lives on, particularly in university adult education.

Although Whitelock acknowledges the statutory board as one indigenous feature in the development of adult education in Australia, he fails to identify others. Revisionist

historians, such as Morris (1990), have put forward another view. According to Morris, "Australian adult education, as it developed, was more than just a remote branch of British adult education.". There were working class, radical, indigenous and practical aspects of its development found in the "socialist schools; technical and vocational adult education; and external studies" (Morris, 1990, p. 232). While these developments emerged over the first half of the twentieth century, events in the 1960s and 70s challenged the great tradition. Among these were the withdrawal from the field by some of the remaining universities, the removal of Commonwealth funding of university adult education and growing diversity in the practice of adult education to include the education of adults generally as well as the intentional, systematic, uplifting liberal adult education which was its staple previously.

This background is important when writing about a recent adult education movement among the elderly, the University of the Third Age (U3A). This movement has spread rapidly throughout Australia in the 1980s and 1990s and shares in the British liberal tradition of adult education tinged with a more radical tradition. It espouses a philosophy of voluntary, collective, self-help education "assert(ing) the right of every trueborn Englishman and Englishwoman to start, if they so desire, a university in their own back parlour" and to thumb their noses at the educational edifice (Midwinter, 1984, p.14).

Unlike the Mechanics Institutes and WEAs, U3As have not flourished because of idealogues from overseas aided by local devotees carrying their burning torch. Rather, they are the creation of their members, which is their essential characteric (Midwinter, 1984, p. 11). Wherever U3As have been established, internationally, local people have taken inspiration from the concept, been guided by its founding principles, used the name and set up a group. While they share a common aim to engage older people, through self-help, in learning for its own sake for their personal and social fulfillment and their organisational structures are similar, they differ in aspects such as types of courses, management, sources of finance and association with other educational agencies such as universities.

This paper sets out to document the history of the U3A phenomenon in New South Wales by setting it against the rise of the movement overseas and in Australia and to consider the extent to which, as an adult education movement, it reflects the great tradition or the trend towards indigenous forms of practice. What might be its future when the current diversity of provision of adult and community education in Australia is taken into account?

Taking New South Wales as a focus for this account is particularly appropriate given that there are at least twenty U3As known to have been established (Swindell, 1995) and no previous attempt has been made to document its history. Accounts exist of the origins of U3As elsewhere in Australia, particularly in Victoria and Queensland (McDonell, 1991, 1994, 1995; Swindell, 1993; Whyte, 1991), which have drawn a picture of a strongly supported movement whose time had come. This account of New South Wales U3As will fill a sizeable gap in the history of the movement in Australia and make a considerable

contribution to our knowledge about a subject hitherto rarely touched on in Australian adult education, the education of the elderly.

The U3A Movement's Origins in France and Great Britain

It is right to call the University of the Third Age a "movement", but not a mass movement. In those countries and localities where it has been established it reaches only a small proportion of older people, termed by Laslett (1984, p. 31) as the "interested, motivated, middle-class elderly". The great challenge for U3As and other educational programs for the elderly is how to reach out and involve what Laslett (1984, p. 40) calls the majority "uninterested mass of the elderly" who have eluded such programs in every country in the world where they have been established. There is an irony in the fact that while U3As are the creation of the elderly themselves, most older people are not part of the movement. This situation can be explained to some extent by the origins of the movement in France and England and its university associations.

The Universitie du Troisieme Age

The U3A movement began life in France in 1972 when Professor Pierre Vellas, Professor of Political Economy at the University of Toulouse, conducted a summer school for retired people with a programme of "lectures, concerts, guided tours and other cultural activities" (Philibert, 1984, p. 51). Vellas planned to repeat this experiment in the following summer but so successful was it that he was prevailed upon by his elderly students to design and run a programme of courses taught by university staff, on campus, in the up-coming academic year. Vellas saw in this an opportunity to conduct research on the socio-medical aspects of ageing and to involve his elderly students in the process.

Once news of the Toulouse experiment spread, satellite programmes began in neighbouring cities and mushroomed across France and abroad. The Universitie du Troisieme Age, as it was called, was established in 1973 and held its first international colloquium at Toulouse in that year (Philibert, 1984, p. 52). An International Association of Third Age Universities was formed in 1975 at a congress held in Toulouse and the French national association, the Union Francaise des Universites du Troisieme Age, was founded in 1980 (Radcliffe, 1984, p. 63). Internationally, the movement has gained recognition as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) with accreditation to the United Nations, UNESCO, World Health Organisation (WHO), the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. It has a permanent Secretariat at the University of Toulouse and its own Documentation Centre at the Interuniversity Institute for Social Action at Marcinelle in Belgium (Radcliffe, 1984, p. 70).

One distinguishing feature of French U3As is their association with established universities and government and municipal departments responsible for the welfare of older people (Radcliffe, 1984, p. 63). Indeed, some have been established and funded directly by local government which has become an issue in local government elections. Those located on university campuses occupy buildings owned by the university. In all cases, the membership owns the U3A agency itself and engages in forms of self-programmed university-standard learning, on or off a university campus, organised and presented by university staff.

According to Glendenning (1985, p. 120), French U3As' associations with universities were particular responses to central government legislation in 1968, following the student uprising, requiring universities to embrace lifelong education and to be open to all. Subsequent legislation in 1971 mandating that employers contribute 1% of their salaries'

payroll to lifelong education in universities, industries and voluntary organisations provided an additional incentive. The university connection was encouraged in the early years, also, by an excess of teaching capacity in the established universities (Laslett, 1984, p. 35).

A second distinguishing feature of French U3As is their provincial and local character and diversity of structure. From the outset, the U3A movement struck a rich vein of educational need among the elderly who moved to take it over as their own. According to Radcliffe (1984, p. 63), this was in marked contrast to the French educational tradition of central control and a signal that the French U3A movement could sow the seeds of educational innovation and reform. "(T)he U3A (is) in some measure an expression of a counter-culture, the resort of those to whom a fair measure of educational opportunity has been denied...in France at least, a challenge in support of the right to life-long education" (Radcliffe, 1984, p. 65).

Philibert (1984, p. 55) thought that French U3As could be even more radical by suggesting that "the gratuitous, amateurish character of U3A learning, study and research might become the yeast of regeneration for the entire academic community". In particular, he suggested, the U3A movement could lead to a regeneration in teaching at all educational levels "more respectful of the initiative, interest and idiosyncrasies of their students". Evidence of this has not yet been forthcoming.

If the U3A movement in France has a defining characteristic, it is its attachment to the term "university". In this lies its credibility and criteria for membership of the national association. It is evident in its mission, defined in 1983 as "instruction, productive research, and personal development" (Radcliffe, 1984, p. 64) and in the requirement that university staff teach courses and that each U3A has a direct link with an established university. But not all U3As in France, and certainly not internationally, have embraced the university idea or cemented relations with universities. The majority outside France, Radcliffe (1984, pp. 66-67) notes, have developed on a local community basis "uusually at the initiative of an individual associated with a university who has heard of the concept and sees it as a solution to problems which have already been locally identified.". The Universite du Troisieme Age gave a name and a focus to proposals already being formulated. This appears to have been the case in the establishment of U3As in Britain.

U3A in Cambridge

Although the U3A movement in Britain has eschewed any direct association with universities, its inspiration came from a university academic, Professor Peter Laslett of Cambridge University. The first British U3A was established in Cambridge. Laslett, an internationally renowned population studies historian, known for his research on the education of the elderly in Britain, had attended congresses of the International Association of Third Age Universities in France and was familiar with the French experience. His knowledge of demographic trends indicated that for the first time in human history a mass of elderly people with prospects of increased longevity existed in whom conventional educational institutions had little interest and even less to offer. Laslett (1989, p. 141) found that at least thirty percent of British adults were living in what he termed a state of "indolence" as a result of unemployment, normal retirement and early retirement. Among these he found small groups of active, elderly people, aware of their social and political responsibilities, who were ready to embrace further educational opportunities. It was this type of person to whom the U3A idea appealed.

Cambridge U3A grew out of a committee of interested people which met at Trinity College, Cambridge, in June 1981. Following a public meeting in the Guild Hall,

Cambridge, in July that year, Laslett drew up a the "Objects, Principles and Institutional Forms of the University of the Third Age in Cambridge". According to Dianne Norton, foundation Executive secretary of the National Committee of the University of the Third Age in Britain (1984, p. 109), they became the basis of the National Committee's philosophy and policies.Three broad principles underpinned them (Midwinter, 1984, pp. 7-8):

1. The University of the Third Age shall consist of persons who undertake to learn and to help others to learn.
2. No qualifications shall be required and no judgements made by the University of the Third Age as between applicants.
3. The curriculum of the University of the Third Age shall be as wide as its human and financial resources permit, but the preference of the members will be the only criterion for what is done.

Cambridge U3A had no direct affiliation with Cambridge university primarily because Cambridge had not the slightest interest in supporting such a venture (Norton, cited in McDonell, 1994, p. 2). Nor did it seek sponsorship from any level of government. Instead, it adopted the idea of a self-help organisation built on self-sufficiency, retaining the name "university" in its title in the medieval sense of a community of scholars seeking after knowledge and truth for its own sake (Midwinter, 1984, cited in Glendenning, 1985, p. 122). According to Minichiello (1994, 411), the Cambridge U3A encouraged "a kind of intellectual democracy in which there would be no distinction between the teachers and those being taught", a notion which seems to have had its genesis in Laslett's own educational philosophy for the elderly rejecting socialization and embracing self-realization as its educational aim (Sebaly, 1994, p. 452).

Midwinter (1984, p. 14) believes this reluctance to place the teacher on a high pedestal is rare in British adult education, even in organisations such as the Workers Educational Association (WEA) which has traditionally claimed "an element of democratic oversight". It rests on the self-regulatory principle whose tradition, in Britain, lies outside education. Collective self-help is found in those community ventures and outreach activities which have relied on cooperation and voluntary assistance for their existence. Such organisations flourished in Britain in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the rundown of the welfare state (Young, 1984, p. 101). They "refused either to bow the knee to the soulless public bureacracy or open the purse for avid commercial agencies" (Midwinter, 1984, p. 12).

The U3A movement fitted easily into this tradition for two reasons. Firstly, it is the creation of its members who decide what is to be taught, by whom, in what way and at what cost. Secondly, Laslett aimed to take it beyond the educated middle class it had attracted in France to the mass of Britain's elderly many of whom had been poorly served by their own schooling. His faith in this aim appeared to be borne out by the ready take up of the U3A concept across Britain and the formation of a National Committee. In practice, it has been unable to capture the interest of the mass of Britain's "uninterested elderly" sufficiently for them to join and attend classes. Although not disillusioned by this, Laslett has recognised that his ideal of universal education of the elderly, through U3A, might be unattainable if inappropriate for the present generation of poorly educated elderly Britons. According to Radcliffe (1984, p. 70), social class bias towards the better educated in British U3As has been found internationally, as it has in adult education in general. Even so, this has not hindered the spread of the movement world-wide and the emergence of variants in different countries according to local circumstances.

The U3A Movement in Australia

On an international scale, U3A was relatively late in coming to Australia. The first groups were established in Melbourne in 1984 following public meetings under the auspices of the Council for Adult Education and the Australian Council on the Ageing (Minichiello, 1994, p. 412). One was in central Melbourne and the other at Hawthorne. A third, at Monash University, was established in 1985 (Whyte, 1991, pp. 211-212). These centres became U3As because members of the inaugural Melbourne U3A steering committee were stationed there and they were in close proximity to concentrations of older people. Steering commitee members were familiar with the concept and some had first hand knowledge of overseas examples (Whyte 1991, p. 215).

However, they were not the first such organisations to be established in Australia. A School for Seniors was founded in Launceston, Tasmania in 1981 as a result of an interest in older people's learning by Robert Walden, Northern Regional Principal of Adult Education. It resembled the U3A concept in most respects except that it was under the auspices of the Tasmanian government's Adult Education service (McDonell, 1995, p. 7). It remains the dominant form of Third Age learning in that state with 13 centres while a smaller number of U3As exist mainly in the Hobart area (McDonell, 1995, p. 7).

McDonell (1991, p. 1), a member of the original Melbourne U3A steering committee, states that the main reason for the adoption of the British rather than the French model in Victoria was that more detailed information in English was available about the former than the latter. The steering committee spent little time debating the relative merits of both models, he records, and, in the end, "the UK model was, to us, the more appealing in principle" (1994, p. 2). There was little discussion about whether its self-help, self-sufficiency and low cost nature would succeed in Australia although it seemed suited to the hard times brought about by the recession at the time.

Australian universities, in the main, had ceased to be involved in adult education and certainly were not enamoured of Third Age education. This made the Cambridge model the only practical alternative (Swindell 1993, p. 249). One exception was the Extension Centre of the University of Western Australia which hosted a network of U3As in the south west of that state (McDonell 1991, p.7).

As more U3As were established in Victoria, usually "because someone, in that locality, has learned of the concept and has had the interest and enthusiasm to make the running and get things started" (McDonell 1991, p.5), a network was formed in 1988 under the auspices of the Australian Council of the Ageing. The network, *U3A Network-Victoria Inc.*, acts as a central agency for communication and provision of management advice for member groups and, through its Starter Kit, has become a point of enquiry for new groups throughout the country.

Networks have become features of the movement in other states, also, as U3As proliferated. A *New South Wales State Council of U3As* was established two years ago but the idea of a national network or forum, mooted at the 1995 U3A Conference in Canberra, has met with resistance on the grounds that this might stifle the diversity and relative independence found among the locally established groups (Plumb and Tweedie, 1995, 8-9). McDonell (1991, p. 8) believes this issue will have to be faced up to sooner or later in the wake of the movement's unprecedented growth. This issue of national coordination of the movement and the litle discussed question of international representation of Australian

U3As at overseas conferences and on world bodies, which Sheats identified as problems for university adult education in 1959 (Morris, n.d., p. 6), will continue to be debated within the movement through to its next national conference in 1997.

Growth in the Australian movement, though spectacular, has not been uniform. It has been rapid in Victoria leading McDonell (1994, p. 3) to claim that the level of participation in that state from 1991 to 1994 was higher than in any other country in the world. South-east Queensland is another growth area, having exceeded the national average (McDonell, 1994, p. 4) while New South Wales is experiencing a comparable surge in interest.

Even so, the movement in Australia, like its overseas counterparts, is not a mass movement. In 1991, McDonell estimated that it had attracted only 0.5% of the 2.6 million over-60 year olds in Australia and predicted that this figure would peak at 3% subsequently (McDonell, 1991, p. 8). For all its egalitarian principles, collective self-help organisation and low cost, Australian U3As are confirming the overseas experience, cited by Laslett (1984, p. 38), that it is the better-educated and comfortably well-off who are attracted to the movement (Swindell 1991, p. 183). This poses a considerable challenge to U3A management committees' recruitment strategies in order to broaden the membership base. For the current generation of older people, though better educated than their British counterparts, this might prove fruitless. More success might be achieved with the upcoming, better-educated, generation. Even so, innovation in recruitment is evident. For example, in Victoria an innovative Telelink U3A Program is operating between the state U3A network and the Association for the Blind (Bathurst U3A Inc., 1995, p. 8). Courses are conducted entirely by telephone conference between the homes of the tutors and participants.

It seems that in the foreseeable future the U3A movement in Australia will continue to grow and to epitomise the community-based, do-it-yourself Cambridge model. McDonell (1991, pp. 7-8; 1994, pp. 4-5), however, believes that this voluntary, self-help character of Australian U3As will come under increasing pressure by the twin factors of growth and geography. He is an advocate for a national organisation to act as a peak body lobbying all levels of government and educational institutions on behalf of its constituent members while acting as a national secretariat and information clearing house. Paid secretarial assistance for local management committees is another issue which will have to be faced up to in order to cope with the additional work load generated by course proliferation and membership growth. Paid tutors, already a reality for some U3As where the necessary expertise or will to volunteer does not exist among the membership, may become more widespread. These costs would have to be funded by increasing membership fees, charging for courses or bidding for government subsidies. All these options could steer the movement away from its appealing and hitherto successful mutual-aid foundations which are its present strength. But, if the movement remains true to its founding principles, Third Agers themselves will find solutions which suit them and their learning needs.

The Rise of the U3A Movement in New South Wales

There are twenty U3As in New South Wales listed in the 1995 U3A Directory (Appendix A). At least three others, possibly more, are known to exist, including Liverpool U3A - School for Seniors Inc., of which the author has first hand knowledge. Each of those listed in the Directory was contacted by mail and asked to provide answers to a set of questions about its origins and operations in a reply-paid envelope (Appendix B). Sixteen replies were received (Appendix A). A novel feature of this request for information was an

invitation to tell the U3A's story on a cassette tape provided for the purpose. One, only, chose to do this, the others preferring to send a written reply together with documents describing the U3A, its management and courses.

In the following account, the information contained in these replies is presented as vignettes, arranged in the chronological order in which they were established. This allows each U3A to be introduced and its regular and distinctive features to be highlighted. Above all, it caters for the diverse ways in which the U3As have been set up and organised and acknowledges their independence as a defining feature.

U3A Shoalhaven Third Age of Learning Inc.

U3A Shoalhaven Third Age of Learning Inc. is located on the New South Wales south coast with campuses at Nowra and in the Jervis Bay/St. Georges Basin region. It claims to be the first established in New South Wales in May 1987 following a public meeting chaired by Alderman Paul Bland of Shoalhaven City Council. Cliff Picton of the Australian Council of the Ageing, a member of the original steering committee responsible for introducing the concept in Melbourne in 1994 and Barry Russell of the NSW College for Seniors in Wollongong, spoke at that meeting which formed a steering committee to oversee the establishment of the initiative. In 1994 it joined the NSW Council of U3As and has its immediate past president on the Council in order "to play a part in determining the future direction of U3A in NSW" (*The U3A Newsletter*, 1995b, p. 3).

This U3A subscribes to principles of egalitarianism, mutual aid, independence and the removal of all barriers to learning (*The U3A Newsletter*, 1995b, p. 2). According to the current President, Shoalhaven U3A's aim is "to provide a shared, open, learning experience for people in their Third Age...who have the desire to learn, keep mentally alert and share their skills and expertise or simply their love of learning" (personal correspondence, 1995).

Shoalhaven U3A is run by a management committee elected at an annual general meeting of the membership. It consists of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and six committee members. In keeping with its principle of active involvement, the management committee has given the non-executive committee members roles of course coordinator and assistant co-ordinator, office coordinator, newsletter editor, assistant treasurer and publicy officer. All positions are voluntary in accordance with the U3A's principle of giving "dignity to the value of unpaid work" (*The U3A Newsletter*, 1995b, p. 2).

Membership is open to all people in active retirement. There are no age restrictions. Currently there are 243 members which is less than the high point in 1994 of 275 but higher than the 213 of 1993. Members are drawn from Nowra itself, Berry and Kiama to the north, Jervis Bay and St. Georges Basin to the south and Kangaroo Valley to the west. They pay a joining fee of $5, an annual membership fee of $10 and course fees of $3 for a one day course and $10 for a six week course. Shoalhaven City Council has figured in the history of this U3A having an alderman as its original chairman and now one of its

patrons. Until recently, council has provided the U3A with rent-free rooms in the School of Arts for use as an office and a classroom. A small rental is now levied which led to a course fee increase and a search by the management committee for alternative accommodation.

Courses offered by this U3A aim to be "as wide as the human resources of members permit" (*The U3A Newsletter*, 1995b, p. 2). They run during the daytime, predominantly in the time period 10 am to 3 pm, across four terms with up to 25 courses per term. The program of courses for winter and summer terms in 1995 ranges from the academic such as mathematics, languages and literature through topical interest such as contempory issues and health to the practical such as computing, art and crafts, Tai Chi and circle dancing (*The U3A Newsletter*, 1995a, 1995b). These are augmented by an occasional speaker series on topics of interest to Seniors, one off specials and end of term luncheon speakers.

In keeping with the U3A principle of learning for its own sake, this U3A encourages flexibility in course delivery, with study circles favoured, and standards set "by mutual agreement between learners, tutors and the committee" (*The U3A Newsletter*, 1995b, p. 2). Occasionally a course such as "Memories of the Forties" does not have a tutor, starting with a convenor and continuing according to the participants' interests. A Southern Support Group has been formed linking this U3A with others in the southern region. It has permitted the exchange of ideas and tutors.

Shoalhaven is an active U3A which, after eight years, appears to have fulfilled its founding aims.

The Forbes College for Seniors Inc.

The Forbes College for Seniors, located in the central west of NSW, had its beginnings in September 1986 when Roger McAdam, Principal of Forbes College of TAFE, and Bob Lytton, newly retired Principal of Forbes Public School, surveyed local seniors' groups to see whether a need existed for a seniors learning programme. The responses were positive so a six week session of Friday activities for seniors was inaugurated at the TAFE College in Spring 1987. Seventy people attended which prompted Roger McAdam to suggest that the group continue as an independent body. Following a meeting of interested people in December 1987, The Forbes College for Seniors was founded and a management committee elected. The first courses were run in the middle of 1988 and the College became an incorporated body in 1989.

According to Bob Lytton (personal correspondence, 1995), neither he nor Roger McAdam knew anything about the U3A movement at the time when The Forbes College for Seniors was established. Lytton recalls that they first became aware that they had set up a U3A when they wrote for information to the NSW College for Seniors in Wollongong in 1988. The reply informed them that they were a U3A and advised them to contact the U3A Network - Victoria for additional information. This they did and when

the NSW Council of U3As was proposed in 1993 they secured a place on its steering committee.

The Forbes College for Seniors subscribes to conventional U3A principles. It offers educational and recreational activities for seniors who have turned sixty years of age and emphasises the joy of learning for its own sake. There are no educational entry requirements and no examinations, tests or awards. It seeks to be low cost and self-help. It promotes a positive view of ageing encapsulated in the slogans "retirement is not the end but the beginning of an even more exciting lifestyle" and "bowls, golf, fishing and gardening are all great, but an active and stimulated brain will keep you younger, longer" (Introducing the Forbes College for Seniors, n.d.).

The College is run by a management committee elected annually. In addition to the usual executive roles, a coordinator has, up until 1995, planned the courses and other activities. This function will be taken over by a course committee in 1996. According to Bob Lytton (personal correspondence, 1995), the College runs on a "shoe string budget" funded by a low annual subscription of $8 supplemented considerably by sales of a booklet "Memories of Forbes, the 30s and 40s" produced by the Local History class. Costs have been kept down also through the provision of class venues, free of charge, by local institutions such as churches, Shire Council, State Emergency Services, public schools, the retirement village and private individuals.

Membership has risen from 102 at its inception in 1988 to 170 in 1995. Members come from a cross-section of the local community, twenty-eight being men and the oldest 92 years of age.

The College aims to present as wide a range of courses as possible in order to cater for the diverse learning interests of its members. Members are encouraged to try out courses that they might otherwise have thought were beyond them. These are confined to the Autumn and Spring months. Morning tea meetings featuring a guest speaker are held in Winter while the College goes into recess in Summer. From a list of courses taken since the College's inception, 47% are practical, 41% are academic and 12% topical. A suite of 10 courses is offered in Spring 1995 ranging from crafts and armchair travel through musical appreciation and current affairs to French, basic Economics and early history. The College has organised two study tours in recent years, the first, in 1991, being "The History of Transport on Sydney Harbour" and, in 1993, an historical tour of Richmond, Windsor and the Blue Mountains, focusing on modes of transport. A College choir has been formed recently to perform on special occasions such as the Christmas luncheon.

The Forbes College for Seniors Inc. is enjoying considerable support from seniors in its local district. In its publicity it presents itself as a welcoming organisation for seniors running activities at times and at a pace conducive to active participation. It has tuned in to its members learning styles and interests which is no more obvious than in the published account of the1993 study tour with its "do you remember when" flavour.

Sydney U3A (U3A - The Third Age Institute of Higher Learning Incorporated)

Sydney U3A with a membership of around 3,500 is one of the largest in Australia. It is atypical in its organisation, membership characteristics and courses although it subscribes to the fundamental U3A principles of autonomy, democracy, self-help and low cost.

According to the current secretary (personal correspondence, 1995), this U3A owes its foundation to Dr. Lenore Coltheart, at that time (August 1987) in the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Sydney and June Pettit of the University of Technology, Sydney. The Centre for Continuing Education was not very enthusiastic about the idea but the originators found a supporter in Sir Hermann Black, then Chancellor of the University of Sydney. A steering committee was convened by Lenore Coltheart at a preliminary meeting of supporters later in 1987 and a link with Macquarie University was established in January 1988 when Dr. Denis Davis of the School of Education was co-opted. A seeding grant was obtained from the NSW Board of Adult Education and the U3A came into being at a public meeting chaired by Dr. Coltheart in the Great Hall of the University of Sydney on 14 March 1988. The following acount of this meeting was published in Sydney U3A's first Newsletter of May 1988:

> An interested audience of around 200 people attended and listened to the addresses of the guest speakers Sir Hermann Black, Chancellor of the University of Sydney and Cliff Picton, Chief Executive Australian Council of the Ageing and Secretary-General of the International Federation on the Ageing.
>
> Among the outcomes of the Meeting were the adoption of the U3A Sydney constitution prepared by the Steering Committee, the election of the Management Committee to help operate the U3A and the immediate registration of many members.

Things did not run as smoothly as anticipated, initially, as there appear to have been teething problems in getting courses started and recruiting tutors. The inaugural newsletter spoke of "difficulties" experienced by the committee and the considerable workload in arranging courses (U3A Sydney Newsletter, 1988, p. 4). According to one of McDonell's informants, there was "much enthusiasm but little preparation. There was plenty of icing but no cake: no classes were in place and the initial enthusiasm was lost" (1995, p. 6). Even so, membership grew rapidly from a few hundred to over 3,500 today.

The official title of Sydney U3A, as stated in its constitution, is U3A - The Third Age Institute of Higher Learning Incorporated. Although a focus on higher learning is not central to this U3A's stated objects, which are consistent with those expressed in the Cambridge model, it is evident in much of its practice. Much of this can be attributed to its university associations, but even more stems from the nature of the membership and its predominant locations in the northern and eastern suburbs of Sydney.

Membership is open to anyone who accepts its objects and rules. In 1988 it ranged from 44 years to 82 years (U3A Sydney Newsletter, 1988, p. 4). In a 1994 survey of the membership, Legge (n.d., p. 2) found that 34 per cent of respondents were university graduates of whom 13.4 per cent had post graduate degrees. Rose Leaf, a Sydney U3A tutor, has observed that the membership is largely middle class "pursuing traditional middle class interests" (1994, p. 26). According to Leaf (1994, pp. 26-27), many expect a lecture style of course presentation and resist the adoption of more typically adult education approaches such as workshops, discussions and interactive group processes. "But it is often an uphill battle, as well as a lengthy process to demonstrate the value of an active role for the learner", she states.

Sydney U3A has opted for a management structure unique among Australian U3As consisting of a central committee and seven fairly autonomous regions across the city and the central coast to the north. This pattern is not unknown overseas where local cells in large urban conurbations have been more successful than larger edifices (Midwinter, 1984, p. 13). Each region in the Sydney example has its own committee which elects a representative to the central committee and appoints a course co-ordinator. This arrangement not only increases participation in the affairs of the U3A but also provides points of ready contact between centre and regions. Although this U3A has informal links with several others in Australia and New Zealand, and has lent practical support in the establishment of new U3As in New South Wales, it has not joined the NSW Council of U3As and opposes such over-riding associations. Apart from the seeding grant mentioned earlier, Sydney U3A has not received any outside aid. Its income derives solely from the membership subscription of $20 per annum. Other costs such as rental of venues and course materials are borne by the members.

Courses offered and study tours organised have a heavy academic emphasis. Legge (n.d., p. 3) surveyed the Winter 1995 programme and found 182 courses on offer. These included 38 language courses as well as Music Appreciation, Introduction to Chinese Painting and several literature courses. The Spring 1995 programme includes other academic courses such as history, sociology, politics and curent affairs. A sprinkling of discussion groups exists, being the dominant mode of presentation in the Parramatta Region. Legge (n.d., p. 3) believes that the diversity in academic offerings reflects the educational profile of the members. "Qualified leaders could be found for virtually any subject in which the members are interested", she notes. This has not been the case always, particularly in the early years. Yet, an interesting recent development has been the inservice training of tutors over the past eighteen months in areas such as communication skills, the lecture method, group dynamics and language teaching (Leaf, 1994, p. 26).

Sydney U3A's decidedly academic profile sets it apart from others in New South Wales. If there is anything elitist in this it is no different from the challenge presented to all U3As to appeal to Laslett's "uninterested mass of the elderly population" (1984, p. 39). In Sydney's case, according to Legge (n.d., p. 5), the availability of well qualified tutors and a critical mass capable of sustaining an academic orientation supports its academic bent.

Less academic needs are met elsewhere from the breadth of adult education courses available

U3A - Third Age of Learning (Wollongong) Inc.

U3A Wollongong has as its motto "Learning for Pleasure". It focuses on those activities in which its members have not previously had an opportunity to participate through "learning by listening, learning by discussing, learning by doing, learning by researching" (Program and Newsletter, 1995, p. 1).

This U3A, located in the city of Wollongong, south of Sydney, had its first enrolment day on 24th March 1988. According to the current secretary, 76 people became members on that day. Membership has steadily increased to around 300 today made up of 90 per cent women (Beryl Linden, personal correspondence, 1995). There is no minimum age for membership, the age range of current members being from 50 years to 80 years. The minutes book of the first meeting records that classes in Art, Languages, Dressmaking and Public Speaking were run by tutors recruited from among the membership (Linden, 1995).

U3A Wollongong is managed by a committee of ten including executive members, two programme coordinators and a publicity officer. It enjoys the patronage of the local Federal member of parliament and the Lord Mayor and an alderman of Wollongong City Council although little tangible support is given by the city council. It has no formal links with other seniors groups but appears to be a member of the NSW Council of U3As. Its only sources of funding are membership fees which stand at $20 single and $35 a couple per annum. An increase of $5 is likely in 1996. The main venue for classes, the Wollongong City Surf Club, has to be rented at $60 per week. A Girl Guides hall also has to be rented although the Country Womens Association's rooms are free of charge. A private home is used for an advanced Italian class.

This U3A has a mixed program of classes from Mondays to Thursdays. On Monday mornings there are Current Affairs sessions presented by members, invited speakers from the community and academics from the University of Wollongong. According to the Secretary, Beryl Linden, these sessions are very popular, attracting 70-90 people (personal correspondence, 1995). History and art are popular classes also. Other classes include languages, literature, studies of indigenous and immigrant Australians and armchair theatre. As with most U3As, this one finds the recruitment of volunteer tutors to be one of its biggest problems.

U3A Western Sydney - Chifley Chapter Inc.

U3A Western Sydney - Chifley Chapter Inc. appears to have been influenced to some extent by the organisational structure of Sydney U3A. It is based in Penrith and runs classes in various locations from St. Mary's in western Sydney to Mt. Victoria in the Blue Mountains. It originated in 1989 out of a meeting of interested people convened by Jack

Cocks of Windsor. Freda Whitlam chaired a steering committee which took the proposal for Chifley Chapter to a public meeting. The U3A was established, subsequently, with headquarters in Penrith.

Penrith City Council resolved in July 1995 to entrust the care, control and management of the former School of Arts to the Chifley Chapter which has given it rent-free office accommodation, classrooms and a potential source of income from tenants. Senior Citizens Clubs, Community Health Centres, the Uniting Church, community and heritage centres and private homes provide no-cost venues for class meetings elsewhere. The Nepean Community College and St. Mary's High School have made their computing classrooms available also.

Chifley Chapter has a management committee of 11 to handle its business affairs, membership, classes, liaison with council and with the NSW Council of U3As of which it is a member. Its office is manned on a voluntary basis from 10 am to 2 pm daily which coincides with the times when most classes are held. Membership is open to those over 55 years of age. It has grown steadily from 112 in 1990 to 522 at present of whom approximately 80 per cent are women. About 10 per cent come from a multicultural background. The membership fee has risen to $20 for 1996 owing to costs associated with maintaining an office and rooms in the Penrith School of Arts.

If this U3A has a motto it is "lively classes for lively minds" (University of the Third Age: Notes, 1995, p.1). This focus on the intellect is evident in a number of its course offerings for 1996 (University of the Third Age: Notes, 1995, pp. 2-3). Many have serious titles including History of Christianity, Australian, European and Renaissance History, Latin and other languages. Computing, the practical arts, environmental and community studies, travel and bridge make up a smaller topical and applied group of subjects. According to the secretary (personal correspondence, 1995), Australian History, computing and environmental studies have been the most popular over the years. Lectures, discussion groups and research groups are employed. As with other U3As, the curriculum of studies largely reflects the learning interests of the members although, in the case of Chifley, it appears also to be determined by the interests of those presenting them.

Hunter U3A Inc.

Hunter U3A was established in Newcastle in 1990. According to Morna Carruthers, the secretary (personal correspondence, 1995), Lois Martin saw how Shoalhaven was operating at Nowra and approached the Hunter Regional Council of Adult Education. Details of a subsequent meeting of interested people leading to the establishment of the U3A are sketchy but it ran its first programme of 5 courses in Spring 1990. It belongs to the NSW Council of U3As and has close social ties with nearby Lake Macquarie and Hawks Nest U3As.

Membership is now 320. Most growth took place in the years 1992 to 1994 plateauing in 1994 after the establishment of its neighbouring U3As. According to the secretary

(personal correspondence, 1995), approximately 87.5 per cent of the membership is made up of women and most are of Anglo-Celtic background. There are no Asian or Aboriginal members. Most are in the age range of mid-fifties to mid-eighties and described by the secretary as middle to working class with no "ex-doctors or solicitors". Members pay a membership fee of $20 per annum single or $35 per married couple. A small charge is levied for the use of some course venues.

This U3A receives no direct outside support although the winter course programme for 1995 reveals that venues such as the Newcastle City Mission, Pensioners Advisory Centre and Newcastle Region Art Gallery might be free of charge as courses run there do not attract a levy. The secretary states that Newcastle City Council has offered no tangible support. The Hunter A.C.E. office allows use of a photocopier for a fee and the W.E.A. provides a class meeting room for a fee. A local member of parliament allows free use of a photocopier.

The course programme for Winter 1995 shows considerable diversity. Serious academic topics such as Socialism Revisited, Music, German and French are in the minority. Topical, practical and leisure activities predominate. Some classes run over a number of sessions but a number are single session only. The secretary reports that a talk by a plastic surgeon and a visit to the Sydney Synagague in the past term were highly popular.

While the aim of this U3A is to provide educational activities for the members by the members, the secretary reports that course needs have outstripped the capacity of the membership to run them. Tutors who are non-members have had to be recruited, on a voluntary basis, to fill the gaps.

Bathurst U3A Inc.

Bathurst U3A Inc. was established on 21 February 1991 at a public meeting held in the Bathurst Council Chambers. This venue is significant of the role of council in supporting the development of the U3A. The mayor was made its patron, secretarial asistance form council was offered and a council officer made available for liaison. In 1994, the U3A was granted a special concession by council for library usage.

In addition, Charles Sturt University - Mitchell, located in Bathurst, has been closely associated with the U3A since the outset. It has offered support such as the use of campus facilities for meetings and classes and a small financial donation from the Vice-Chancellor for the purchase of university services. The Vice-Chancellor was made an honorary member at the Annual General Meeting in 1994 and, in the same year, the university provided the U3A with office space on campus. Its campus radio station, 2MCE-FM, broadcasts a weekly one hour program of U3A news and music requests, presented by the U3A President. U3A members have provided opportunities for university students in Nursing, Communications and Photography to work with older people.

For all its council and university support, this U3A is very much owned and run by its members. Freda Whitlam, the keynote speaker at the inaugural public meeting, impressed on the 87 people who attended the importance of council and university associations and of networking with other U3As (Minutes of a public meeting to establish a branch of the University of the Third Age in Bathurst. The local media, Bathurst Information and Neighbourhood Centre and a host of local clubs, government departments, schools, churches and businesses have been approached and provided support over the years. Bathurst U3A is a member of the NSW Council of U3As and the Western Region Support Network of U3A which includes U3As in Orange, Cowra, Parkes, Wellington and Forbes. It is a foundation member of the Bathurst Educational Advancement Group.

Bathurst U3A has a management committee of 10 elected at the Annual General Meeting. In addition to the executive there is a Program Organiser and a Publicity Officer. Membership is open to those aged 55 years and over. It stands at close to 200. Annual membership subscriptions are low, being $10 for new members and $5 for existing members.

A range of courses is offered with an emphasis on serious academic and topical subjects supplemented by leisure and health activities. French, Italian, German, Psychology, Geology, Ancient History and Aspects of Religion are representative of the academic while Our Environment, Art, Bridge for Beginners, Yoga and Music Appreciation typify the others. Some tutors have present or past university associations although the U3A aims to find tutors from among the membership, where possible. Yet, for all its contacts and support, it has not been able to run a computing course to date.

Tamworth Third Age Learning

Tamworth Third Age Learning is small by U3A standards with a membership which fluctuates between 25 and 40. It does not appear to have been established in the typical U3A fashion of a steering committee followed by a public meeting and election of a management committee. It is based in the St. Andrews Retirement Village, Tamworth and grew out another seniors group known as "Grey Matter". Assistance in setting it up was given by a council community worker and a special needs coordinator from the city library. The group commenced operations on 19th November 1991.

According to the secretary (personal correspondence, 1995), the founding members wanted to become more knowledgeable about many subjects such as basic law, languages, the environment, philosophy, stress management, Australian history and other cultures. Learning about these subjects has been engaged in in a number of ways. There are "regular studies" which attract about 10 members, guest speakers, "member participation days" and excursions to historical sites in the local area. These learning activities appear to derive directly from the members' interests.

Being small and located in a retirement village, this U3A does not have the same overheads as those serving the wider community of older people. The membership fee is

$10. A "user pays" principle applies with respect to course costs which, the secretary suggests, deters pensioners from enrolling in set courses running over a series of sessions.

Although this group would like to increase its membership and it could call upon the support of the local council, it is but one of many groups available to senior citizens in the Tamworth area. The secretary believes that title U3A Learning puts up barriers for some people, particularly with memory problems, but those who attend regularly enjoy learning and feel they are well informed.

Cowra U3A Inc.

Cowra U3A Inc., in central-western New South Wales, commenced on 21st April 1992. It originated out of a public meeting in Cowra in July 1991, chaired by the Shire President, at which representatives of the Department of Health, Orange U3A and Bathurst U3A spoke about the U3A concept. It became an incorporated body in March 1995 and is a member of both the NSW Council of U3As and the Western Region Support Network of U3As. It is run by a small management committee.

Membership is small, reflecting the scattered population of the town and surrounding district. It is open to anyone over the age of 55 years. 15 members were enrolled on its first day in 1992 rising to 45 today. At present these are all female although some men were members early on. The secretary notes that a men's group is being formed in the town which might merge with U3A at some time in the future (personal correspondence, 1995). An annual fee of $10 is levied together with a $3 subscription to the Police Citizens Youth Club for use of their premises and $6 for public liability insurance.

Courses are held at the Police Citizens Youth Club on Tuesdays from 9.30 am to 1.30 pm. They are of 30 minutes duration and focus on leisure, exercise, wellness, craft and social recreation. One feature is a guest speaker each day who speaks for an hour and a half on topics such as Modern Art, Armchair Travel, Herbs, Environmental Studies and Computers. One course, Women Over 60, is described as a "certificate course', running for a period of 6 weeks. Occasional excursions to local places of interest and social gatherings with neighbouring U3As complete Cowra U3As yearly activities. Diversification of course offerings is limited by the availability of tutors, which, in a relatively small community, are hard to find. According to the secretary, some who are available want to be paid which runs contrary to U3A's self-help principle. In the end, it is a matter of the members' ability to pay.

The Parkes College for Seniors

The Parkes College for Seniors, also known as Parkes U3A is located in central-western New South Wales. The idea of establishing a College for Seniors came from a meeting of the Parkes Ladies Probus club in March 1992. A public meeting was called at which Bob Lytton of nearby Forbes College for Seniors. and three people who had participated in the public meeting to form the Bathurst U3A attended. The latter were Jim Selby, a social

planner for Orange District Council, Mark Skidmore from Orange Regional Health Department and Geoff Cawthorne of Orange U3A. A steering committee was formed which prepared a constitution and a draft programme of courses which were presented at the first Annual General Meeting on 23 June 1992. These were ratified by the 66 people who attended and The Parkes College for Seniors came into being. This College decided against incorporation opting instead to take out a public risk insurance policy. In another departure from conventional U3A practice, tutors are called "leaders" as this title is thought to be less formal and might attract more people. It is a member of the Western Region Support Network of U3A.

The Parkes College of Seniors is run by a management committee of eight elected at the Annual General Meeting. Apart from the executive members, there is a course coordinator, coach trips officer, publicity officer and newsletter editor. In the first two years, the local Guide Hall and Country Women's Association's rooms were used for enrolment days and classes. In 1995 the College has acquired the use of the Masonic Hall in return for a donation.

Membership of the College is open to citizens of Parkes and district who are over 50 years of age. In its first term in 1992 it had enrolled 85 members, rising to 121 in early 1993, and 125 in 1994 before dropping back to 104 in August 1995. Membership is predominantly female (Clare Chapman, personal correspondence, 1995). The membership fee has been pegged at $10 since the College's inception. There appear to be no outside sources of income although the initial steering committee received a small donation from the Parkes Ladies Probus Club to get things started and a grant from the local Community College was used to purchase a white board for classes. The College enjoys the support of local media, clubs, community agencies, TAFE college and schools in promoting its activities and providing venues for meetings and classes. The TAFE college has given the College for Seniors' members borrowing rights to its library.

The College aims to provided educational and recreational activities for its members. Course offerings reflect this, focusing on practical activities and topical issues of interest to seniors such as gardening, arts and crafts, armchair travel, wills and local history. More serious subjects such as German, Japanese, Australian Literature and Australian History were offered in the early years but, apart from history and poetry, have not attracted consistent interest. The College's newsletters have made regular calls for new course leaders in "any subject you think may be of benefit or interest to our senior citizens" (Update, 1993, p. 2). It appears that the College has had to recuit leaders from outside its membership. Course offerings have increased in number from an average of 10 per term in the early years to around 14 in 1995. Excursions to places of local interest and morning teas with guest speakers are regular features.

University of the Third Age, Armidale Inc.

University of the Third Age, Armidale Inc, (U3AA) was established in 1992 after two public meetings identified a demand and formed a steering committee of interested people. At the second meeting a speaker from Sydney U3A addressed the gathering on the origins of the movement and how Sydney U3A was formed. A seeding grant from the state government was obtained through the efforts of one of the foundation members.

U3AA is run by a management committee which includes the usual executive positions and a course coordinator. It shared office space initially in the Dumaresq Shire Council Chambers and later in the local branch of the RSL. The office is manned on a volunteer basis for an hour each week day.

U3AA is in contact with other U3As in southern Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria and advises its members of upcoming U3A events such as state and national conferences. A recent Newsletter (University of the Third Age, Armidale Inc. Newsletter, 1995) included an extract from U3A Brisbane's Newsletter advising members of a course auditing opportunity at Griffith University.

U3AA has benefited from proximity to the University of New England, Armidale. Retired professors and lecturers are among its members and the initial and only President is an emeritus professor. A number of courses and talks are presented by existing university staff and the U3AA membership is called upon to assist various university projects such as being part of a Personal Reader Scheme for disabled students in Dixon Library, participating in research projects and assisting the university's archivist sort and classify photographic negatives in a new Heritage Centre. The whole tone of this U3A's activities is one of richness and diversity.

Membership is open to retired people over 55 years of age and has grown steadily from 194 in August 1993 to 254 today. The current Vice-President believes it has plateaued at this figure (personal correspondence, 1995). There are 193 females and 61 males. A membership fee of $20 is levied.

This U3A's courses are in keeping with its objects to foster continued intellectual activity among its members through learning activities and the social contacts arising from those activities (Constitution of University of the Third Age, Armidale). They run five days per week across two semesters. Some deal with serious academic topics such as Philosophy and Western Thought, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Unity of Semitic Religions is one of the largest and most successful. Others are packaged into friendly titles such as New Science, Maths Without Fears, Armchair Geology and Creative Writing. Local History, Poetry and Play Reading and Musical Appreciation are popular as are courses dealing with arts and crafts, physical exercise and lifestyle topics of interest to retired people. A variety of venues is used including library rooms, a common room in a university college, Kent House, CWA rooms and private residences. U3AA enjoys the support of both local councils, clubs and educational institutions.

Campbell University of the Third Age Inc.

Campbell University of the Third Age Inc. is located in Campbelltown, south-western Sydney. It is the brainchild of Harry and Betty Mayfield who have been actively involved in other U3As in Sydney. Harry Mayfield was one of the original committee members of the Sydney U3A, holding the offices of Vice-President and President from 1988 to 1990. The Mayfields established the Endeavour Campus of Sydney U3A in 1989 and Hume U3A in 1991. Campbell emerged in 1993 after the Mayfields and some others broke away from (Harry Mayfield, personal correspondence, 1995). It stands apart from other seniors groups in the area but is a member of the NSW Council of U3As of which Mayfield is Vice-President

The exact processes by which Campbell came into being are not clear although the Mayfields subscribe to the conventional format of calling a public meeting with the support of relevant agencies, enrolling the foundational membership, electing a management committee and ratifying the constitution. According to Harry Mayfield, when Campbell became incorporated it sought, and was given, permission from the state government to use the term "university" in its title. Mayfield states that it is the first U3A in New South Wales to have been given this permission (personal correspondence, 1995), although University of the Third Age, Armidale Inc., established in 1992, bears the term "university" in its incorporated name and was set up with a seeding grant from the New South Wales state government (U3AA Newsletter, 1993).

There are two consequences for Campbell of being able to call itself a "university". One is that it aims to teach its courses at a tertiary education standard. According to Mayfield, subjects like Creative Writing and History are taught from a strong academic and theoretical basis leading to publication of the members' work either independently or in Campbell U3A's official journal. A second consequence is that Campbell has, in its constitution, a principle seeking affiliation with the nearby University of Western Sydney, Macarthur though retaining its own organisational and financial autonomy. This relationship has been advantageous to Campbell as its members have been made "honorary alumni" of the university and have university library borrowing privileges. Campbell is able to advertise itself at university open days, has access to university facilities when these are vacant during semester breaks and has its brochures and considerable portions of its publicity material designed and printed by the university. This emphasis on university standards and a close relationship with an established university appears to put Campbell more in the French U3A tradition than the British.

Campbell is a small U3A with a membership of around 50. The minimum age for membership is 50 years, those who are younger being accorded the status of "honorary members". An annual membership fee of $15 is levied entitling members to attend classes free of charge except for the purchase of necessary course materials. Financial overheads are contained by seeking support in kind, such as that given by the university, although Mayfield has not found the local council so generous. The Country Women's Association rooms are used for its regular classes.

Campbell U3A's course offerings for 1995 are a mixture of academic and activity subjects. Mayfield, himself, teaches French, Calligraphy, Poetry, Creative Writing, Literature, Psychology and History to "university standard". German is taught by another course leader as are Craft, Folk Art and Tai Chi. Mayfield argues that the latter group of subjects is appropriate for a University of the Third Age on the grounds that any subject can be included provided "it is treated in the right manner" (personal correspondence, 1995). He cites, for example, the teaching of Vernacular Carpentry at Cambridge University as an academic study of medieval and tudor building and shipwrighting techniques.

Campbell University of the Third Age Inc. has taken literally its aim to stimulate mental activity for people in active retirement through the creation of a community of scholars. This is in contrast to other U3As' focus on social as well as mental stimulation. It remains to be seen whether Campbell's high road to learning in the Third Age is an appropriate answer to older people's learning needs.

U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore) Inc.

U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore) Inc. is one of two U3As on the north coast of New South Wales which were established within two days of each other in March 1994. The other is U3A Ballina/Byron Inc..

U3A Northern Rivers developed out of a couple of events which occurred around the same time. Dr. Doug MacLean, Lecturer in Psychology at Southern Cross University, and Brian Spilsbury, President of Ballina Skillshare, had heard about the U3A movement and thought it would flourish on the north coast. Around the same time Stephen Tardrew, a student at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, advertised for people interested in the U3A concept to contact him to assist him in his studies. A meeting of 18 interested people was convened, subsequently, at the Southern Cross University Library on 28th October 1993 to explore the possibility of establishing a U3A locally.

A report on this meeting (Minutes of the First Meeting, 1993) indicates that the Starter Kit produced by the U3A Network in Victoria was used to inform and guide those present on how to establish a U3A. Information on how to start a U3A from Sydney U3A was also tabled. Probably as a result of the latter, some discussion took place over whether a regional model should be adopted with Lismore as the regional centre and various U3A satellites in surrounding towns. This matter was left to the interim steering committee of seven to decide. A public meeting at the Lismore Workers Club on 23rd March 1994, chaired by Lionel Phelps, past Regional Director of Education and Chairman of the Interim Council of Southern Cross University, launched the U3A based in Lismore. It has a management committee of 10, including three course coordinators. It became incorporated in June 1994.

Membership is open to anybody who has a desire to teach and learn although it is clearly aimed at retirees. It has risen from 75 who joined at the inaugural public meeting to 160 in

mid-1994 and 250 today. This U3A claims that around 30 per cent of its membership are men which is higher than the national average for U3As of 20 per cent (The Independent Age, 1994, p. 3). A membership fee of $25 single or $35 double is levied which is its sole source of regular income. A small grant was received from the local council to purchase a second hand photocopier and the Lions Club paid the initial insurance premium.

U3A Northern Rivers enjoys the support of a number local educational institutions, adult education centres, clubs and businesses some of which afford venues for courses. Lismore College of TAFE has provided a room for use as the U3A's office. It is manned by volunteers from 11 am to 2 pm on two days per week.

U3A Northern Rivers offers a mixture of social and educational activities for its members. Social activities include bus tours, picnics and gatherings to celebrate events such as the Melbourne Cup and Christmas. Courses run on six days per week. They cover topics ranging from serious academic studies of Latin, Philosophy, Greek and Roman History through financial planning and lifestyle topics of interest to retired people to hobby classes such as photography, art and craft and bee keeping. While it is not clear whether tutors come exclusively from the membership, a number attended a weekend workshop for adult and community education teachers in mid-1994 in a bid to improve their skills.

A novel course offering in 1994 was Science And The Humanities (SATH) adopted from the Sunshine Coast U3A in Southern Queensland. SATH consists of separate short subjects of one to three classes' duration in any area of the sciences and humanities. Initially, SATH was presented in two sessions per week reducing to one and was open to non-members at a nominal charge. Virtually any topic in the U3A's curriculum could be presented in this way. SATH might have been supplanted by a discussion on topics from the *New Scientist* magazine as the latest number of the U3A's journal, *The Independent Age*, makes no reference to it.

U3A Ballina Byron Inc.

U3A Ballina/Byron Inc. shared similar beginnings to U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore). During the inaugural steering committee meetings it became clear that the interests and lifestyle of the communities to be served by a U3A were sufficiently different for two separate U3As to be established. U3A Ballina/Byron was launched at a public meeting at the Ballina RSL Club on 25th March 1994.

U3A Ballina/Byron Inc. has grown from the 90 enrolled at the public launch to 235 members today in 31 communities along the north coast of New South Wales and neighbouring areas. Age is not a criterion of entry although the current membership ranges in age from late 50s to late 80s. Approximately one-third of these is men, most of whom are in husband/wife membership partnerships. A membership levy of $25 single and $35 per couple is levied.

According to the current secretary (personal correspondence, 1995), the issue of regionalising the U3A has remained alive since the launch. Although there are three regions large enough to support a U3A only one, in the Brunswick Valley, has offered courses of its own due to the efforts of a husband and wife team who were members of the original steering committee. However, they do not feel ready yet to form their own U3A.

U3A Ballina/Byron Inc. is a member of the NSW Council of U3As and supports the idea of a national U3A organisation in Australia. It maintains close links with other seniors groups in the area and with U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore). The members of each enjoy reciprocal attendance rights at one anothers' courses. The former's management committe, as with most volunteer community organisations, has undergone a number of changes in personnel in its initial period. As well, the work load falls to a few in this U3A which calls into question the mutual aid/self-help principles on which U3As are founded as well as exhausting those carrying the load. For example, the current secretary convenes four classes, serves as U3A secretary, social secretary/treasurer, organiser of social functions and bus trips and is editor of the newsletter. Her husband is U3A President and Public Officer and fills in when there are gaps. Most of the management committee are tutors.

A management committee of 13 runs this U3A. It has no office as such, all business being conducted from the homes of the President and Secretary, using their equipment. The local council has given no tangible support. The Ballina RSL Club allows free use of a meeting room once a month while the Ballina Fair Shopping Centre, the U3A's biggest sponsor, makes available rooms for classes and meetings on six days per week free of charge. The Shopping Fair also allows the U3A space for its promotions and displays. Local newspapers have been supportive as have a local graphics design firm and photocopy shop in publishing the U3A's newsletter.

Classes are held in Ballina on six days per week. Some deal with serious topics such as History, Philosophy, Languages, Astronomy, Social Aspects of Victorian England, Botany and Permaculture and have proved popular. Equally popular are Tea And Talk, a fortnightly discussion class of one-off topics and Armchair Travel. Tea and Talk has stimulated longer courses. In addition to its educational activities, this U3A organises social events and bus trips "with some kind of educational component".

Finding tutors is a perennial problem and the management committee has not been able to get participants in popular classes such as Creative Writing to become tutors and form new classes. Tutors and aspiring tutors, however, have been offered a Tutor Training Workshop run by the foundation President.

Foster - Tuncurry U3A Inc.

Foster - Tuncurry U3A Inc. is located in the Great Lakes area of the central coast of New South Wales. This area is one marked by a steady immigration of retired people which has

raised particular social and educational issues for older people in the area. The U3A was established early in 1994 as an initiative of the Community Liaison Officer attached to Great Lakes Shire Council. It subscribes to the U3A principle of providing opportunities "for older people to use their leisure time to teach and learn together" (University of the Third Age Inc. Foster-Tuncurry Branch, Brochure, n.d.). Its constitution is modelled on that recommended by the NSW State Council of U3As.

Membership of this U3A is open to any person over 55 years of age "who is retired or semi-retired and interested in the pursuit of knowledge" (University of the Third Age Inc. Foster-Tuncurry Branch, Brochure, n.d.). It has grown to 65 since its inception. An annual membership fee of $20 single and $35 double is levied although pro rata rates are available. The membership is predominantly female ranging in age from mid-50s to mid-80s. According to the secretary (personal correspondence, 1995), most socio-economic and educational groups are represented.

This U3A enjoys the support of Great Lakes Council. Apart from initial support from the Community Liaison Officer, it receives a small annual grant from council. The local Adult Community Education centre has provided assistance with class venues and printing of advertising material. The books are balanced by the voluntary support of the management committee members who use their own homes, computers and stationery to get the administrative work of the U3A done.

A four term year is adopted and a modest number of courses is offered on three days per week. These have included Art History, Book Discussions, Poetry, Current Issues, Literary Appreciation and hobby/interest courses such as Stamps, Introduction to Antiques and Great Collections and Collectors. Many are single sessions, the more serious running over multiple sessions. Foster-Tuncurry U3A would like to run year-long courses with the assistance of tertiary education institutions.

Liverpool U3A - School for Seniors Inc.

Liverpool U3A - School for Seniors Inc. was established in the second half of 1994 as the result of a public meeting held at Liverpool City Council to explore the need for a seniors' learning centre in south-western Sydney. The current President recounts that there had been a previous attempt to establish a U3A but it failed because of lack of support. A new Active Seniors Cordinator at Liverpool Council took this up as a worthwhile project and convened a well-attended public meeting out of which a management committee was formed and a course programme planned. Membership had grown to 380 by June 1995 and 31 courses were being offered (Liverpool U3A - School for Seniors Inc., 1995).

It would be fair to say that this U3A has flourished because of the tangible support it has received from Liverpool City Council, its Active Seniors Coordinator and an enthusiastic group of Third Agers. Not only has Council made available meeting rooms in its chambers for use by the U3A management committee but it has also provided financial, human and in-kind resources to support the establishment of the U3A. Recently, it has moved into its own premises, rented from Council for a nominal amount. The Mayor of Liverpool is its Patron and, in his foreword to the 1995 Term 3 Course Programme, states that Council's

support is an expression of the high regard the community holds for its seniors and gratitude for their contribution to the development of Liverpool.

Membership of this U3A is open to all people over 50 years of age. Members pay an annual membership fee of $20 which entitles them to attend classes of their choice. Some tutors come from among the membership while others need to be recruited from elsewhere for classes to run. A small number, for example those who teach Line Dancing and Creative Writing, are paid because of their specialist skills. Participants meet the extra cost themselves.

Among the most popular classes in Term 1 1995, as an example, in terms of numbers attending, are Line Dancing, Ball Room Dancing, Aqua Aerobics, Tai Chi, Computing and Painting. Courses of a more academic nature, such as Psychology and languages, don't draw numbers nearly as well which the President believes reflects the interests of people in the area. Some 15 venues are used for classes.

In its overall membership profile Liverpool U3A is similar to other U3As as was shown in a comparison by Williamson (1995) with twelve campuses surveyed by Swindell (1990). Differences were in its younger membership pattern, less well-off clientele possessing lower levels of schooling and associated lower rates of course participation prior to membership of U3A. All these are indicative of the area's population characteristics, lower socio-economic status and, in some pockets, social and economic disadvantage. In a sense, U3A's low cost, self-help and community-based character have appealed to a number of Third Agers in Liverpool and filled a gap in available adult learning opportunities.

In the Great Tradition of Liberal Adult Education?

There are few consistent clues in searching for an answer to the question as to whether Australian U3As, and those in New South Wales in particular, are in the great tradition of British liberal adult education. For one thing, the U3A movement is taking place in the latter part of the twentieth century. This is not the earlier period from which Whitelock drew his conclusion that Australian adult education was essentially derivative from Britain. In one sense Australian U3As are derivative in that the concept was imported from Britain and the principles underpinning the Cambridge U3A have served as something of a model. But, they are not exact replicas. They are part of an international movement which had spread to other parts of Europe and North America well before it came to Australia. This movement prides itself on being essentially grass roots, whatever country it flourishes in. Every Australian U3A, therefore, shares in a concept which had its genesis overseas and whose guiding principle is that each is the creation of its members.

Consequently, diversity characterises the movement in Australia, as the New South Wales case studies show. At the same time, there is something familiar about each U3A which derives not so much from the great tradition *per se* as from a common set of ideas grounded in the literature about the movement in Britain, France and Australia. Indeed, the brochures, statements of aim and background accounts of the New South Wales U3As reproduce the words of Eric Midwinter, Peter Laslett and Jack McDonell in explaining what they are about..

These ideas stated in the U3A literature confirm that it is essentially a liberal education movement and therefore has a link with the great tradition. Laslett's summary of U3A's guiding principles (1989, pp. 172-174), coincide with Whitelock's description of a liberal university adult education conducted in a small tutorial class and being without examinations, non-vocational, anti-elitist and, above all, given to teaching "liberal or humane studies". These principles inform the mottos and statements of aim of the NSW U3As such as "love of learning" (Shoalhaven), "learning for its own sake and for enjoyment"(Forbes) and "learning for pleasure" (Wollongong and Bathurst). They are implicit in the learning activities of U3As.

While they paraphrase British writings about the movement, those writings are not their only source. Another is the tradition of learning for its own sake found in mainstream adult education (McDonell, 1991, pp. 3-4). As well, there is the world-wide trend towards overturning stereotypes of the elderly and changing negative social attitudes about their potential for learning. The traditional view of the gerontology profession that "normal" ageing means decline is no longer tenable in a period in history when older people are living longer, more active and healthier lives than ever before.

Indeed, some Australian adult educators recognised that such ageist stereotypes did not apply to their older learners well before the U3A concept had been heard of in Australia. Robert Walden, for example, was astounded at the mental abilities of outwardly frail, geriatric patients in a Launceston nursing home when they were given opportunities to pursue interests such as musical appreciation (personal interview, November 1995). Ann Whyte's account of how the U3A movement started in Victoria draws attention to the fact that members of the initial steering committee for the Melbourne groups, Cliff Picton, Jack McDonell, Jill Thompson and herself, were confident that the idea was sensible (Whyte, 1991, p. 212). Their collective experience of older people's learning potential appeared to be a factor informing their confidence. According to Whyte, their main concern was how older people themselves would respond to the U3A idea. Would it capture their imagination? Their concern was short-lived given the movement's considerable growth nationally since 1984 and in New South Wales since 1987.

This growth was not sparked by a zealous Laslett from Britain or a McDonell in Australia carrying the torch of the British movement. Its grass roots character reveals something indigenous about U3A in Australia. The New South Wales case studies show that each U3A, in its organisation, management and activities reflects something of the interests and character of the community in which it has taken root. These interests have been personified in those who took the initiative to found each U3A in the first place, formed a steering committee, joined the management committee and became instrumental in organising courses and other activities. Sydney U3A's academic character, for example, reflects its founding by academics in the Great Hall at the University of Sydney which attracted an educated clientele interested in serious topics. Campbell U3A has been shaped by the Mayfields' view of a U3A with university aspirations and associations. Some of the

country U3As focus on leisure, recreational and hobby courses which reflects their members' interests and the available tutor expertise.

Being a city or a country U3A *per se* does not appear to make a great deal of difference to its character either except, perhaps, for the size of the membership and the consequent availability of tutors which, in turn, influences the size and diversity of the course program. Some country U3As such as Bathurst and Armidale, with close university associations run courses with an academic bent while in city U3As such as Liverpool and Hunter, academic subjects are in the minority. Overall, the clientele seem to be the better educated and better off in their community, regardless of the location, and are predominantly women. This gender aspect of the U3A movement sets it apart from other adult education movements aimed at the working class and social improvement in Australia. It warrants more serious study in the history of adult education than it has received to date in Whitelock's account and in revisionist writing.

It appears, from all this, that whether the U3A movement in Australia is in the great tradition of British liberal adult education is not the real issue. The real issue is whether, as a movement whose time had come in the 1970s, U3A can sustain its momentum through the 1990s into the twenty-first century and beyond. Already there are signs in New South Wales that the spectacular membership growth is beginning to plateau in the longer-established U3As such as Shoalhaven, Hunter and Parkes. Allied to this is the inevitable withdrawal from management committees of those whose initial energy and enthusiasm were instrumental in founding their U3A and the need for those with matching enthusiasm to fill the ranks. The heavy work load which has fallen onto the executive members of U3A Ballina/Byron Inc., for example, and the tendency for members to see the U3A as a service provider rather than as a self-help organisation, are symptomatic of this problem in the voluntary sector as a whole as well as in U3A.

For U3A to sustain its momentum and relevance it needs to address the related issues of broadening the membership base and forming a national organisation. In these respects, it appears to be playing out adult education scenarios of an earlier period. With respect to membership, the movement tends to attract active older people who are female, better off financially and are better educated than many of their peers. There are exceptions. In the U3As at Armidale, Lismore and Ballina approximately one-third of the members are men. Liverpool U3A in Sydney has attracted more people of working class background with less than two years of secondary schooling than was found in a survey of twelve other Australian campuses by Swindell reported in 1990 (Williamson, 1995, p. 3).

But, as noted earlier, it is not a universal movement among the elderly. Indeed, there is something exclusive about it given that it is currently attracting only about one per cent of the aged cohort in the Australian population. Overseas experience has been similar (Laslett, 1984, pp. 39-40; Radcliffe, 1984, p. 70). Perhaps, in the longer view of history, it will be seen as one of many educational options available to the elderly in the late twentieth century, a scenario more in keeping with their diverse backgrounds, interests and learning needs.

The issue of grouping Australia's U3As into a national organisation, with its attendant benefits of being a peak body with respect to governments and international bodies, is a thornier one. A move in this direction put at the 1995 National Conference of Australian U3As led to heated discussion and clearly divided loyalties. At stake, many opponents of the move thought, is the sturdy independence of each U3A which, they believe, is the strength of the movement. The move's supporters believe that a central body is the only way in which the movement can bcome recognised by governments, gain the support of the formal sectors of education and access outside sources of funding. Such funding may become necessary in order to meet the inevitable need for paid office staff, renting of premises and payments to some tutors whose expertise cannot be found among the membership.

Such vigorous debate, tinged with acrimony, Morris (n.d., p. 4) states, has been a characteristic of Australian adult education at the organisational level throughout its history. It is to be hoped that in the resolution of these issues, wiser counsel will prevail in the U3A movement's discussions than occurred in some of these earlier debates where "(i)nstead, of evolving sound indigenous forms, organised adult education had frittered away the energies of its enthusiasts in petty jealousies between organisations and on bitter rivalries" (Alexander, 1959, cited in Morris, n.d., p. 4).

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APPENDIX A

U3As in New South Wales and those who participated in this study*

The Forbes College for Seniors Inc.*

U3A - Third Age of Learning (Wollongong) Inc.*

Sydney U3A*

Wellington School for Seniors

Hunter U3A Inc.*

Bathurst U3A Inc.*

Cowra U3A*

Shoalhaven Third Age of Learning Inc.*

U3A Milton-Ulladulla Campus Inc.

Orange U3A Inc.

U3A Western Sydney - Chifley Chapter Inc.*

U3A Dubbo Chapter Inc.

Tamworth Third Age of Learning*

The Parkes College for Seniors*

University of the Third Age, Armidale Inc.*

Lake Macquarie U3A Inc.*

U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore) Inc.*

U3A Ballina/Byron Inc.*

Campbell University of the Third Age Inc.*

Foster - Tuncurry U3A*

Liverpool U3A - School for Seniors Inc.*

Hume U3A

Hawkes Nest U3A

APPENDIX B

Draft of a letter sent to each U3A in New South Wales requesting information about its origins and operations

Faculty of Education

12 September 1995

The Secretary

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently doing research into U3As in New South Wales. I am particularly interested in finding out something about how each U3A started and its history to date. This might include the following information:

1. Who started the U3A and how it came about?

2. Its aims and purposes/constitution and links with other U3As/seniors groups.

3. Information about the membership, who they are (male/female, age range, multicultural nature, social class etc), what their learning interests are, membership growth and participation rates in U3A activities.

4. Outside support eg from the local council or other agencies in getting the U3A started and helping to keep it running.

5. The management - membership, role, sources of funding/support.

6. Details of the course programs/timetables since the U3A started and thecourses which are most/least popular.

7. Any other information about your U3A and the Third Age community in your area which might be of interest.

You might already have some or all of this information in document form. If so, I would be grateful if you would send me these documents in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope

If not, I would be grateful if you could send me the information on the enclosed cassette tape. All you have to do is to identify yourself (and any other speakers), give the name of your U3A and tell me the "story" of your U3A using the points above as a guide, if you like. ***If you would like to send me documents and a tape that would be even better still.***

In return, I will send you a copy of my paper documenting the emergence of U3As in New South Wales when it is finished, hopefully by the end of this year. This might be a useful way for you to find out more about the U3A movement and to understand more about your own U3A and where it is going as a result.

If you are able to assist me in the ways requested above, could you send me your information/cassette tape by Monday 9 October 1995.

I might like to follow this up with a telephone call if I need further information. Please indicate in your reply if you prefer me not to make any further contact.

Thankyou in anticipation of your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Alan Williamson